

# Minutes of the virtual meeting of Learning & Quality Committee at 4pm on 29 April 2020

Present: Katie Danvers Hewitt, Tim Mason & John Royston-Ford (Chair).

Apologies: Karen Wood (Staff Governor)

In Attendance: Liz Davies                      Quality & Standards Manager  
                    Kara Hall                      Learning & Development Manager  
                    Sue Martin                      Interim Vice-Principal Quality & Learning  
                    Craig Mincher                      Director Employer & Commercial Services  
                    Paola Schweitzer                      Clerk to the Corporation  
                    Penny Wycherley                      Interim Principal

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## Minutes

### 1 – Standing Items

#### 009 Apologies for Absence

Karen sent her apologies.

#### 010 Membership

The Chair thanked members for attending the virtual meeting and noted that there would be two vacancies on the Committee shortly (Karen was leaving the College in early May).

#### 011 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

#### 012 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 05 March 2020 were **Agreed** as a correct record and will be signed by the Chair.

#### 013 Matters Arising

Paola stated she would discuss the possibility of recruiting a governor from the

Portsmouth Secondary Heads network with Martin/Penny as soon as possible.

## **2 – Matters for Discussion & Decision**

### **014 Covid-19 update with particular reference to learning outcomes & quality assurance (including Quality Strategy Operational Plan).**

Sue and Kara provided an update on the impact of Covid-19 on learning outcomes and quality assurance at the College (including paper 2649/20/L&Q).

Staff had adapted well to the College closure and had moved swiftly to online delivery. The mode of delivery varied, with some areas following the timetable and doing live teaching sessions and others making phone calls and providing work packs for students without internet/computer access. Teachers were offering excellent support to students. Many were reporting working longer hours and so were being encouraged to define clear work hours, rather than being constantly available. Overall student engagement and attendance were strong although there were some pockets where it was more challenging. Advanced Practitioners (APs) had been assigned to different areas and were joining online Microsoft Teams groups, looking at teaching material and getting feedback to provide support and check quality. Online intensive care meetings were taking place and new ways of carrying out observations were being developed. Tips for Teachers sessions were proving successful and more would take place focusing on areas identified through feedback. One member asked how many students had limited or no access to internet/computer facilities, to which Sue stated that approximately 400-500 work packs had been sent out. Work packs were returned to the College via freepost or drop boxes and then forwarded to teaching staff (appropriate measures were in place to keep staff and students safe).

Penny had written to local college principals, putting forward Kara's suggestion to create inter-college subject specialist networks so teachers could share good practice informally. The initiative had been enthusiastically received and was working well with a meeting taking place shortly to see how it could be further developed. Members were delighted at the College taking a proactive, collaborative approach and congratulated Kara. One member asked how Covid-19 would affect the awarding of qualifications. Sue confirmed that GCSEs would be based on estimated grades followed by a national standardisation process. Assessing vocational and technical qualifications was more complex, particularly with regards to safe to practice assessments and further guidance was awaited from awarding bodies. The College was preparing for every eventuality by collecting assessment schedules and using ProMonitor.

### **015 Teaching, Learning & Assessment Update**

Kara presented the teaching, learning and assessment update (paper 2628/20/L&Q), stating that the main points of the update had been covered under

the previous item. She noted that Andy Morris and Sarah Matthews were now in place as APs and that all staff had been given guidance on safe working practices. She highlighted a few areas of good practice including the Foundation Prospects team who were holding inside outside picnics, family quizzes and dance lessons and drew members' attention to some of the online resources being created by teachers. One member congratulated staff on their interesting videos and Kara stated that whilst some staff had initially felt overwhelmed, they had risen to the challenge and were developing new skills. Members stated that they would welcome an update before the next meeting and it was agreed that a summary of AP activity to be considered by the Executive team before half term would be circulated to Committee members for information. Members **Noted** the teaching, learning and assessment update.

## **016 Apprenticeship Update**

Craig gave an update on apprenticeships (paper 2629/20/L&Q), stating that the apprenticeship team had adapted well to the lockdown. Reviews with learners and employers had increased by 60%, as had the number of apprentices on/ahead of target progress. Curriculum planning had resulted in the decision to remove four programmes due to a lack of growth opportunities, local competition and/or suitability to deliver related to quality of delivery. Five new programmes had been proposed to target local levy paying companies, to upskill College staff and increase apprenticeship contribution levels.

One of the biggest challenges was the reduction in apprentices completing their apprenticeships, as many programmes required licence to practice assessments and these could not currently take place. The Institute for Apprentices had published a list with some allowances and the College was ensuring apprentices were test ready for when assessments could resume. Approximately 176 apprentices had been furloughed (meaning they were able to continue training) and two put on a break in learning (meaning all activity ceased and the College was unable to have any contact). This compared to 50/60% on a break in learning in other colleges. It was clear the impact of Covid-19 would have a lasting impact and would affect in year income. Craig stated there were plans to bring some apprentices onto the Northarbour site to resume training in small groups and it was hoped this would be rolled out to as many programmes as possible. Members **Noted** the apprenticeship update.

## **017 Learning & Quality Risk Register**

Sue presented the learning and quality elements of the College risk register (paper 2624/20/L&Q). Audit Committee considered the main risk register and each Committee reviewed risks relevant to its area as a standing agenda item.

Risk 3: *Failure to meet retention, achievement and success targets*: Retention was currently holding up. Risk 6: *Poor learning recruitment* posed a key risk. Action was being taken in a number of areas including a city-wide collaborative project to

provide a separate online landing page providing advice and guidance to year 11 students. This would shortly be developed to include subject specific materials directing young people to the various curriculum offers. This would be used as a feeder for the College's recruitment strategy, alongside an online open evening on 20 May. Departmental open events were also being planned and would be tailored to specific cohorts. Risk 7: *failure to meet standards in external quality reviews*. Staff continued to look at quality issues and teaching, learning and assessment although Ofsted had currently suspended all inspections. Members **Noted** the learning and quality risk register.

## 018 Data Dashboard

Sue presented the data spreadsheet (paper 2625/20/L&Q) developed by the Business Intelligence team summarising College performance and the College's own data dashboard. It included a three-year trend and an overview of in-year and final outturn performance.

In year retention was currently 95.2%, lower than the same time last year but significantly above the national average for general FE colleges (GFEs). Retention for level 3 16-18 had declined, mainly due to the College ceasing A level provision at the end of 2019/20. A task group has been established to implement actions to mitigate against further decline. Retention for 19+ had increased compared to the same time last year (from 96.5% to 97.1%) and apprenticeship retention was currently 81%, representing a 17.6% increase. Attendance was currently 86% against the College target of 90%, representing a drop of 2.4% compared to 2018/19. Attendance was similar to the sector average for GFEs and Sue suggested that the College target of 90% was too high. It was **Agreed** that members would, based on recommendations, review the target at the next meeting. Members **Noted** the data spreadsheet.

*Subsequent to the meeting, the Principal and Chair agreed that this item be renamed data spreadsheet to more accurately reflect its nature.*

## 019 Quality Improvement Plan

Sue presented the quality improvement plan (paper 2626/20/L&Q) stating that it had been updated to show progress against actions and impact up until the end of March. Progress was in line with the expected cycle of the learner journey however it was too early to demonstrate impact for most of the actions. In addition to the improved attendance and retention rates for most courses, progress had been made with the increased use of ProMonitor by teachers to plan and support learner development, managers had more time to focus on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment due to reduced meetings and the staff survey demonstrated improved satisfaction and communication. Areas requiring further development included low retention in Automotive (84.3%) and declining retention in Business and Travel and Tourism (down 6% since 2018/19) and overall

attendance at the College (86% against a target of 90%).

The Chair asked that the RAG rating include a date and that the impact column show progress at the current time. Penny confirmed that the quality improvement plan (with the amended RAG rating) was annexed to her Principal's Report and the results of the Staff Survey would be considered by Corporation at its next meeting. Members **Noted** the quality improvement plan.

## **020 Higher Education (HE) Strategy**

Sue presented paper 2627/20/L&Q setting out options for the College's HE strategy which was due for renewal, thereby creating an opportunity to review the delivery model. Over the last three years there had been a reduction in student numbers and this, exacerbated by the cost of registration with the Office for Students (OfS), had resulted in a loss of income to the College. Members discussed the three options proposed:

1. Remain with the current offer;
2. Create a formal partnership with the University of Portsmouth to include a franchise agreement for the College to teach HNC and HND programmes. This option would not require the College to register with the OfS;
3. Develop partnerships with other HEI's and continue to be subject to OfS requirements.

Members believed that as a community college, Highbury had a responsibility to facilitate access to higher education within the city. One member noted that the OfS burden on management time and governance was onerous. In response to a question, Penny confirmed that the University of Portsmouth had a number of effective working relationships with other colleges and was keen to engage with Highbury College. Members believed option 2 was the best option and **Agreed** to recommend this to Corporation.

The meeting finished at 17.35

Date of next meeting 29 April 2020.